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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that explored the extent of knowledge and use of school-based management concepts by faculty, graduate students, and school administrators are presented in this paper. Nationwide data were obtained from surveys that were returned by 63 professors of educational administration, 82 principals, and 216 graduate students in educational administration. Findings indicate that all three groups have different perceptions of school-based management, particularly misconceptions about the supporting research base and participants. Each group had limited information, but each agreed that school-based management is not a passing fad. Ten tables are included. (65 references) (LMI)

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WHO KNOWS WHAT?: SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

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WHO KNOWS WHAT?: SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

School reform and restructuring have mandated several concepts for educational administration to enhance the ability of the school administrator to be an "instructional leader" (Bancroft & Lezotte, 1985). With emphasis on student achievement, the instructional leader for the next decade must be prepared to implement various components of site-based management, school level decision-making, and/or empowerment. Many reform factors have evolved from court decisions and reactions by state legislatures (Burns & Howes, 1988). Based on the June, 1989, decision of the Kentucky Supreme Court that education in the state was unconstitutional, and the reaction by the Kentucky General Assembly [legislature] requiring site-based management to address these mandates, interest developed concerning "who knows what about site-based management?" Research was initiated to determine the extent of knowledge and use of site-based management concepts as perceived by a national sample of professors of educational administration, graduate students in educational administration programs, and current school administrators.

The subject of school-based management is currently a much used topic of discussion in more than 30 states. School based management is an idea whose time has come for many school systems across the United States. SBM, as it is sometimes called, is on line and is fully operational in several school systems and is an option to be considered by reformers involved in the reformation movement now seeping through the nation's schools.

The legacy of the current system of school management goes back in time for more than one-hundred years. It was born out of a mandate by legislatures to establish a system of common schools to educate children. Its goal was to meet the needs of society in a rapidly industrializing age. The centralized system of schools was developed from a decentralized system of one room schools that was unable to educate children to meet the needs of this new society. The new centralized system evolved along with the bureaucratic management system that we know today.

The current system of public education has lapsed into stalemate in many areas of the country. Many state systems are underfunded, resulting in less than adequate schools, which is leaving the education of the children in these schools in jeopardy. People are demanding for fundamental change. The question is will the management change may be a

partial, or it a total one.

By definition, school-based management transfers operational decision making from the central district office to the individual school. Mertens and Yarger (1988) believe school-based management could provide a context for fully empowering and involving teachers in professional matters that concerns them. It could provide the impetus and the structure for better aligning the best of professional teacher culture with the legalities of school policy making and administration.

School-based management is often thought of in regard to other goals, such as increasing bureaucratic economy. However, in theory, it also provides the conditions for more fully developing teaching as a profession. Central to the concept of school-based management is involving those "closest to the action", the key players, making the decisions. School-based management provides an opportunity for bringing the expertise and experience of teachers to bear on educational problem solving and agenda determination (Mertens & Yarger, 1988).

School-based management may be utilized to empower and involve classroom teachers in the process of decision-making, but there are other issues to be considered as part of the concept. These issues include the concept of checks and balances, colleagiality, and peer review.

Check and balance systems must be developed that enable role groups to understand and be sensitive to the needs of others and to work together in a spirit of cooperation based on respect and acceptance of mutual goals.

Colleagiality is described as school environments that are based on the belief that everyone has the same set of professional purposes, that is, the instruction of children, and that everyone has a special contribution to make. Teachers must have an opportunity to provide input into virtually all areas of school operations.

School administrators are likely to support school-based management because it helps them to escape the bureaucratic control of the central office (Mertens & Yarger, 1988). It is unlikely, however, that administrators will enthusiastically seize upon school-based management's potential for increasing teacher empowerment and involvement.

However, school-based management may be an idea whose time has come politically.

Whenever the subject of SBM is brought up for discussion, there appears to be a fundamental lack of understanding of the real issues involved in school improvement. Part of this failure to understand may lie

in the choice of words. Talking about school-based management seems to imply the school makes all the decisions, or all decisions. Such an interpretation fails to recognize that decisions made at school sites are the major arenas for educational improvement and change. Proponents of SBM believe the focus on the school as a "center for decision making and renewal" is critical to the reform of education and the development of schools to meet 21st Century needs. There is a significant difference between talking about schools as centers for renewal and depicting them as bases for management. The differences arise because the work center has two different meanings. Most educators agree that the individual school should be the focal point to affect change and bring about an improvement. There is less agreement that the school should be the site of professional inquiry and reflective practice-- the place for the critical thinking, dialogue, decision-making, action and evaluation that determines educational change (Clark & Sirotnik, 1988).

The literature on educational reform and school-based management illustrates that in the 1960s and 1970s forms of school-based management, usually referred to as "decentralization" and "school-site budgeting," rose to popularity (Carr, 1988). These were adopted in order to give political power to local communities, increase administrative

efficiency, and offset state authority (Wissler & Ortiz, 1986). In the late 1980s, however, school-based management became the center of national attention for significantly different reasons (Dreyfuss, 1988). Site-based management (SBM) was implemented to influence change in the educational process by empowering school staff to facilitate improvement in education (Carnegie Forum, 1986).

The concepts of SBM are principles borrowed from business and industry. The trend towards decentralization of authority was noted by Naisbitt (1982) in his best selling Megatrends and Peters (1989) in Thriving on Chaos. Senge (1990) goes even farther, giving new emphasis on the learning disorders of organizations and the necessity to decentralize. The strategy of site-based management is perhaps best understood within the context of applying Professor Deming's theory, labeled Theory Z by Ouche (Lewis, 1985), to complex educational organizations. These basic concepts have become preferred due to research on school effectiveness, particularly the research of Edmonds (1979) and Guthrie (1986).

Although the literature provides illustrations of many forms of SBM, David (1989) noted that the essence of SBM is school-leveed autonomy plus participatory decision making. An AASA/NAESP/NASSP joint task

force (1988) stated that site-based decision making is when more decisions **flow-up** through the system, rather than **down** from the top. This procedure involves individuals who are closest to the problem or decision situation to be the ones who make the decision: teachers on curriculum, principals on building-wide problems, and superintendents on district-wide decisions.

A search of the educational literature revealed numerous references to site-based management, but little empirical research was found on the topic (Harrison, Kilion & Mitchell, 1989).

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the research were:

1. to identify the knowledge base of individuals concerning site-based management;
2. to determine the impact of educational reform which requires site-based management concepts to be implemented in educational administration; and,
3. to analyze the use of site-based management concepts in contemporary educational sites.

METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

A review of literature, research, and data from experts in the area of site-based management was conducted. A research instrument for a profile analysis on site-based management was developed by the researchers. Using a national network of professors in educational administration, the instrument was sent for data collection to professors, graduate students in educational administration programs, and current school principals. The data collected were analyzed to determine the respondants' understanding of the concepts related to site-based management, the explanation of these concepts by professors in courses in educational administration, and the understanding of practicing by principals.

Professors from seventeen (17) universities agreed to participate in the network approach for data collection. Instruments for professors of educational administration, graduate student in educational administration programs, and current school principals were sent to the network participants. Instruments returned provided responses from sixty-three (63) professors of educational administration, eighty-two (82) school principals, and two hundred and sixteen (216) graduate students.

The research instruments contained thirty-three (33) statements concerning site-based management. Respondents were to answer "true" or "false" to each statement. The statements were drawn from current literature on site-based management.

FINDINGS

The results indicate that the three groups; practicing principals graduate students, and educational administration professors have different perceptions of site-based management. Although all the survey results are not reported in this presentation, the data contained herein are illustrative of opinion variety concerning site-based management. Only three statements "Teachers are responsible for making decisions at the school level;" "in site-based management, leadership is not a crucial element in schools, rather management becomes the primary focus;" and, "site-based management is like other educational reforms, a passing fad," were congruent among all three groups, which highlights the major finding: there is not sufficient and concise information available concerning the attributes of site-based management. Perhaps this is best exemplified by the statement regarding the research base supporting site -based management. Both professors and principals agree that SBM is not supported by research, while graduate students believe that SBM is largely

substantiated by research.

Respondents also disagree about whether students, administrators and teachers must participate in SBM. They also disagree on the primary focus of SBM and whether it has been successfully implemented.

However, they do agree that SBM is not a passing fad.

"Teachers are responsible for making decisions at the school level."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	60	20	16.16	7.88*
Professors	43	20	8.40	7.88*
Students	153	53	29.42	7.88*
Totals	261	95	138.20	10.60*

"True site-based management does not involve additional finding."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	31	51	2.44	7.88
Professors	33	29	1.30	7.88
Students	101	117	1.30	7.88
Totals	165	1.97	1.41	10.60

"All administrators and teachers must participate in order to have operational site-based management."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	52	30	2.95	7.88
Professors	30	32	.030	7.88
Students	145	67	14.35	7.88*
Totals	227	129	13.49	10.60*

"Students must participate in site-based management for it to be meaningful

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	40	42	.024	7.88
Professors	33	28	.204	7.88
Students	135	79	7.33	7.88
Totals	208	149	4.88	10.60

"Site-based management is a relatively new term that is largely substantiated by research."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	32	49	1.78	7.88
Professors	16	45	6.89	7.88
Students	132	79	6.66	7.88
Totals	180	173	.069	10.60

"Curriculum issues are the primary focus of site-based management."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	45	37	1.16	7.88
Professors	17	46	7.63	7.88
Students	71	136	10.21	7.88*
Totals	133	220	10.72	10.60*

"Site-based management has been used with great success in both large and small school districts across the U.S."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	47	30	1.88	7.88
Professors	30	31	.030	7.88
Students	143	59	17.47	7.88*
Totals	190	120	7.90	10.60

"In site-based management, leadership is not a crucial element in schools, rather management becomes the primary focus."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	21	61	9.76	7.88*
Professors	3	58	24.80	7.88*
Students	67	142	13.46	7.88*
Totals	91	261	41.05	10.60*

"In true site-based management, teachers vote to employ the principal."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	37	44	.300	7.88
Professors	22	40	2.61	7.88
Students	85	126	3.98	7.88
Totals	144	210	6.15	10.60

"Site-based management is like other educational reforms, a passing fad."

	Y	N	x^2	.005
Principals	32	50	2.95	7.88
Professors	17	38	4.01	7.88
Students	68	140	12.46	7.88*
Totals	117	128	.250	10.60

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results from the data, conclusions were developed and presented concerning the influence educational reform has had on the perceptions of site-based management in schools and on professors of educational administration. The conclusions and recommendations from the research provide perspicacity for addressing the issues of education for the next century. To provide a productive educational environment for student achievement, collegiality must exist in educational administration with a shared understanding of the knowledge base and meaning of the concept-- site-based management.

The most obvious conclusion of the research is the limited information that all three groups have concerning site-based management.

Whether this scarcity of information results from lack of exposure to the concept, failure to remain current on the professional literature, or a reluctance to consider new ideas, the implication is painfully obvious. Without appropriate information being supplied by professors who are training the next generation of administrators, graduate students in educational administration will be required to go else where for their information. But where? Like wise, if practicing principals are not cognizance of the concepts inculcated into site-based management, then those administrators and consequently their schools will never change. The short term question is "what do we know about site-based management.?" The answer, not enough. But in the long-term view, the real question for future researchers becomes, "Does the program work: does site-based management make a difference for kids?"

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